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FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9748  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE  
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0135  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T FREETOWN 000360

SIPDIS

SIPDIS NOFORN

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDING SIPDIS CAPTION)

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/FO, AF/W, AF/RSA  
DEPT ALSO FOR DS/DSS/IP AND DS/IP/AF  
EUCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/04/2011

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PREL](#) [SL](#) [LI](#)

SUBJECT: AMCIT DETAINED FOR PHOTOGRAPHING SPECIAL COURT, NO  
CHARGES YET FILED

REF: FREETOWN 351

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES JAMES A. STEWART FOR REASONS  
1.4 B/D.

#### Summary

1. (C) On May 2, AmCit Michael Chemidlin was arrested for taking photographs of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (reftel) where war crimes indictee former Liberian President Charles Taylor is incarcerated awaiting trial. Chemidlin was accompanied by two Sierra Leoneans who he said told him to take the pictures. As a member of the National Guard he served in Iraq and befriended Sierra Leoneans working there on contract. Chemidlin traveled to Ghana, then Sierra Leone, and planned to go next to Liberia in association with Sierra Leoneans he met in Iraq and who are associated with an unregistered church. The investigation file has moved to the level of the Attorney General and the Office of National Security which implies that the Government is looking at this as a national security case. No charges have been filed yet, but the law allows ten days after initial arrest in security cases. Post's security contacts have no information linking Chemidlin or his associates with Taylor or his associates. Nevertheless, local authorities are taking seriously any incident potentially related to Taylor. Post's view is that the reconnaissance was real, at least on the part of the those who directed the photographs, but it remains unclear whether the reconnaissance is linked to a credible capacity to threaten Special Court security. End Summary.

#### AmCit Arrested for Taking Photographs of SCSL

2. (C) On May 2, the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) arrested AmCit Michael Chemidlin who had been observed taking photographs of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) facility where war crimes indictees, including former Liberian President Charles Taylor, are incarcerated (reftel). Beginning April 29, the SLP invited Chemidlin to the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) headquarters in central Freetown each day for questioning. He had been traveling in the sub-region and was planning to proceed to Liberia on what he described as a church mission.

3. (S/NF) The Chief of Security at the SCSL said that on

April 29, UN security forces at the SCSL compound observed one older white male and one younger African male taking photographs of the outside perimeter of the SCSL compound from Kenyatta Street, the busy street where the SCSL's main entrance is located. The UN security forces contacted the SLP and the SLP Special Branch (SB ) intelligence arm) reportedly questioned one AmCit and two Sierra Leoneans in relation to the incident. Security sensitivities were heightened about 10 days prior, when UN security forces were alerted to watch for "westerners in the vicinity of the SCSL because intelligence reporting (NFI) indicated that supporters of Charles Taylor might use mercenaries to carry out missions against the SCSL.

¶4. (SBU) When the SLP processed the film from Chemidlin's camera, they found several photos of the SCSL's gates, high security walls on different sides of the large compound, and guard towers manned by the UN's Security Forces. As they were taken from various angles and different locations around the perimeter of the walled compound, the SLP judged the photographs not to be consistent with tourist photographs. In addition, the CID indicated that Chemidlin took photographs of the SCSL on two separate occasions, once during the day and another time at night, although they did not share evidence of the latter.

¶5. (C) The SLP also arrested two of Chemidlin's Sierra Leonean friends from his time in Iraq, Demosco Kamala and Felix Rogers who were with Chemidlin when the photos were taken. Chemidlin said that they told him to take the photographs, but the SLP provided post no further information on Kamala and Rogers.

#### Iraq Military Service and Sierra Leonean Friends

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¶6. (SBU) Chemidlin served in Iraq during 2004 as a National Guard cook. While there, Chemidlin became acquainted with

several Sierra Leonean nationals who were working as contract laborers. Several hundred private Sierra Leoneans have worked in Iraq thus far. UK companies recruited them, working through the Sierra Leonean Labor Ministry. Many of them are now unemployed in Freetown and on May 3 a small group of returned workers demonstrated peacefully in front of the CID headquarters where Chemidlin was being held to protest his detention. The leader of one of the group of returned workers told ConOff that they are working with the Labor Ministry on going to Iraq again, but at higher wages. Because they do not want to compromise that opportunity, they said they will not demonstrate again.

¶7. (SBU) In March 2006, Chemidlin stated that he was honorably discharged from the US military, although he may have continuing National Guard duties to fulfill. April 14-18 (per stamps in his passport), he traveled to Ghana, then via air to Sierra Leone. In Sierra Leone, he initially traveled for several days in the interior, and then came to Freetown. Chemidlin told the CID that the purpose of his travel to Ghana and Sierra Leone, and his planned travel to Liberia, was to visit his friends who are associated with the Church in Freetown. According to the CID, the church is not a recognized religious establishment and consists of about 10 members all of whom are Sierra Leonean males aged approximately 18 to 25 years.

¶8. (SBU) CID Director Musa Lappia shared a hard copy of an email reportedly sent to Chemidlin, regarding the church mission, setting forth its basic tenets, and requesting material support. The message was signed by Collins, Sadr, Ansu, Demosco and others and made reference to Brother Paul and Kafui.

#### Detained, No Charges Yet, Investigation Continues

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¶9. (SBU) Chemidlin has not yet been charged with a crime. The CID turned the file over to the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) who, we understand, passed it directly up to the Attorney General's office. It is unclear what statute

he might have violated and the CID would not speculate as to what potential charges might be. Under Sierra Leone law, the Government has 72 hours to file charges in a criminal case, but up to 10 days in cases involving national security. On May 5, Chemidlin's file was transferred to the Office of National Security (Presidency) which makes it likely that the Government will use the 10-day rule.

¶10. (S/NF) Our security contacts at the SCSL say that they also are continuing to investigate. They will be reviewing the tapes from the exterior security cameras from the appropriate dates to see if they recorded Chemidlin or the others observing the court compound.

¶11. (S/NF) Embassy offices continue to coordinate with local security sector contacts to be assured that the incident is investigated for any connection to Charles Taylor. At this point, security contacts have no information linking Chemidlin or his associates to Charles Taylor or known associates of Charles Taylor. The only known Taylor supporters in Freetown are those who visit him at the SCSL prison and who must register to enter, but surrounding whom security contacts say there are no indications of subversive activity.

Comment

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¶12. (C) The lengthy and continuing SLP and SB conversations with Chemidlin about the photographs he took of the Special Court for Sierra Leone indicate that the Sierra Leonean authorities are taking seriously any incident potentially relating to Charles Taylor. The fact that the file advanced quickly to the Attorney General and the Office of National Security is a further such indication. With no charges after three days and the file at high levels, the implications is that the authorities see this as a national security case. However, it could also be because the police are operating at the very limits of their investigative capacity and simply have not yet made full sense of the things. Post's view is that, given the evidence to date, the reconnaissance activity was real and intentional, at least on the part of the

individual(s) who allegedly directed Chemidlin to take the photographs. What remains unclear is whether the reconnaissance is linked to a credible capability to threaten the security of the Special Court. Post will continue to discreetly monitor events. End Comment.

STEWART